

with the provider selected by the parent to the maximum extent practicable.

(c) In cases in which a parent elects to use a child care certificate, such certificate:

(1) Will be issued directly to the parent;

(2) Shall be of a value commensurate with the subsidy value of the child care services provided under paragraph (a)(1) of this section;

(3) May be used as a deposit for child care services if such a deposit is required of other children being cared for by the provider;

(4) May be used for child care services provided by a sectarian organization or agency, including those that engage in religious activities, if those services are chosen by the parent;

(5) May be expended by providers for any sectarian purpose or activity that is part of the child care services, including sectarian worship or instruction;

(6) Shall not be considered a grant or contract to a provider but shall be considered assistance to the parent.

(d) Child care certificates shall be made available to any parents offered child care services.

(e)(1) For child care services, certificates under paragraph (a)(2) of this section shall permit parents to choose from a variety of child care categories, including:

(i) Center-based child care;

(ii) Group home child care;

(iii) Family child care; and

(iv) In-home child care, with limitations, if any, imposed by the Lead Agency and described in its Plan at § 98.16(g)(2). Under each of the above categories, care by a sectarian provider may not be limited or excluded.

(2) Lead Agencies shall provide information regarding the range of provider options under paragraph (e)(1) of this section, including care by sectarian providers and relatives, to families offered child care services.

(f) With respect to State and local regulatory requirements under § 98.40, health and safety requirements under § 98.41, and payment rates under § 98.43, CCDF funds will not be available to a Lead Agency if State or local rules, procedures or other requirements pro-

mulgated for purposes of the CCDF significantly restrict parental choice by:

(1) Expressly or effectively excluding:

(i) Any category of care or type of provider, as defined in § 98.2; or

(ii) Any type of provider within a category of care; or

(2) Having the effect of limiting parental access to or choice from among such categories of care or types of providers, as defined in § 98.2; or

(3) Excluding a significant number of providers in any category of care or of any type as defined in § 98.2.

#### § 98.31 Parental access.

The Lead Agency shall have in effect procedures to ensure that providers of child care services for which assistance is provided afford parents unlimited access to their children, and to the providers caring for their children, during normal hours of provider operation and whenever the children are in the care of the provider. The Lead Agency shall provide a detailed description of such procedures.

#### § 98.32 Parental complaints.

The State shall:

(a) Maintain a record of substantiated parental complaints;

(b) Make information regarding such parental complaints available to the public on request; and

(c) The Lead Agency shall provide a detailed description of how such record is maintained and is made available.

#### § 98.33 Consumer education.

The Lead Agency shall:

(a) Certify that it will collect and disseminate to parents and the general public consumer education information that will promote informed child care choices including, at a minimum, information about

(1) The full range of providers available, and

(2) Health and safety requirements;

(b) Inform parents who receive TANF benefits about the requirement at section 407(e)(2) of the Social Security Act that the TANF agency make an exception to the individual penalties associated with the work requirement for any single custodial parent who has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care for a child under six years

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of age. The information may be provided directly by the Lead Agency, or, pursuant to § 98.11, other entities, and shall include:

(1) The procedures the TANF agency uses to determine if the parent has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care;

(2) The criteria or definitions applied by the TANF agency to determine whether the parent has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care, including:

- (i) “Appropriate child care”;
- (ii) “Reasonable distance”;
- (iii) “Unsuitability of informal child care”;
- (iv) “Affordable child care arrangements”;

(3) The clarification that assistance received during the time an eligible parent receives the exception referred to in paragraph (b) of this section will count toward the time limit on Federal benefits required at section 408(a)(7) of the Social Security Act.

(c) Include in the biennial Plan the definitions or criteria the TANF agency uses in implementing the exception to the work requirement specified in paragraph (b) of this section.

#### **§ 98.34 Parental rights and responsibilities.**

Nothing under this part shall be construed or applied in any manner to infringe on or usurp the moral and legal rights and responsibilities of parents or legal guardians.

### **Subpart E—Program Operations (Child Care Services)—Lead Agency and Provider Re- quirements**

#### **§ 98.40 Compliance with applicable State and local regulatory require- ments.**

(a) Lead Agencies shall:

(1) Certify that they have in effect licensing requirements applicable to child care services provided within the area served by the Lead Agency;

(2) Provide a detailed description of the requirements under paragraph (a)(1) of this section and of how they are effectively enforced.

(b)(1) This section does not prohibit a Lead Agency from imposing more

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stringent standards and licensing or regulatory requirements on child care providers of services for which assistance is provided under the CCDF than the standards or requirements imposed on other child care providers.

(2) Any such additional requirements shall be consistent with the safeguards for parental choice in § 98.30(f).

#### **§ 98.41 Health and safety require- ments.**

(a) Although the Act specifically states it does not require the establishment of any new or additional requirements if existing requirements comply with the requirements of the statute, each Lead Agency shall certify that there are in effect, within the State (or other area served by the Lead Agency), under State, local or tribal law, requirements designed to protect the health and safety of children that are applicable to child care providers of services for which assistance is provided under this part. Such requirements shall include:

(1) The prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunizations). With respect to immunizations, the following provisions apply:

(i) As part of their health and safety provisions in this area, States and Territories shall assure that children receiving services under the CCDF are age-appropriately immunized. Those health and safety provisions shall incorporate (by reference or otherwise) the latest recommendation for childhood immunizations of the respective State or territorial public health agency.

(ii) Notwithstanding paragraph (a)(1)(i) of this section, Lead Agencies may exempt:

(A) Children who are cared for by relatives (defined as grandparents, great grandparents, siblings (if living in a separate residence), aunts, and uncles);

(B) Children who receive care in their own homes;

(C) Children whose parents object to immunization on religious grounds; and

(D) Children whose medical condition contraindicates immunization;

(iii) Lead Agencies shall establish a grace period in which children can receive services while families are taking